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**MULTINATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ISSUES: WHAT THE OPERATIONAL
COMMANDER CAN DO TO MITIGATE THEM**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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ABSTRACT

Multinational intelligence presents the operational commander with a variety of issues. These issues can negatively impact the function of intelligence and its ability to provide information and assessments that help to facilitate the accomplishment of the multinational mission. A proper understanding of these issues is the critical first step in formulating an effective plan to leverage the benefits of multinational intelligence while minimizing any potential negative impact on operational success. This paper explains the key issues involved with multinational intelligence and discusses actions that the operational commander can take to mitigate them.

INTRODUCTION

United States military history is replete with cases in which its armed forces have either led or supported multinational operations. From the American War for Independence, which found the U.S. forces operating closely with several supporting nations, to Eisenhower's leading of perhaps the most successful multinational operation ever conducted, to the current multinational International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, the U.S. is no stranger to multinational military operations. Despite this abundance of experience, multinational operations continue to present several difficult to solve challenges for operational commanders because there are no easy solutions. The collection, production, and dissemination of operational intelligence for multinational operations are chief among these challenges. Although this paper addresses the issues involved with multinational intelligence from a U.S. leadership perspective, the issues discussed are relevant to any multinational operation.

Sharing is the underlying issue that operational commanders face when synchronizing the operational function of intelligence within multinational operations. The willingness or ability to share intelligence is a critical factor affecting the cohesion and stability of coalitions and greatly impacts unity of effort during multinational operations.¹ To evaluate how well coalitions are sharing intelligence commanders face three key challenges. The first is trust. Lack of trust is an issue that can derail multinational intelligence efforts. Without trust, coalition partners will find it increasingly difficult to work together to provide the commander the most timely, relevant, and accurate intelligence possible. The second issue

¹ Russell W. Glenn, *Band of Brothers or Dysfunctional Family? A Military Perspective of Coalition Operations During Stability Operations*, RAND (Santa Monica: CA, 2011), 5.

facing operational commanders is the tradition of operating on need-to-know hierarchy of a command structure and the detrimental effects that it has on intelligence sharing. Even if operational commanders are able to mitigate the challenges of trust and emphasize the need to share intelligence, they will also be forced to overcome the third challenge associated with multinational intelligence, the cumbersome bureaucratic approval processes involved with sharing intelligence. However, operational commanders can mitigate the intelligence challenges associated with multinational operations with competent operational leadership and multinational planning efforts.

COUNTERARGUMENT – EXCESSIVE RISK

There are those that would contend that intelligence sharing and the issues it presents operational commanders during multinational operations need not be addressed or mitigated. Because sharing intelligence presents its own set of problems that have not been critically analyzed or understood, and that the issues created by sharing intelligence are more harmful than if sharing efforts had not been made. Simply put, the benefits of an intelligence sharing relationship do not justify the potential risk. There is some logic to the idea that sharing intelligence and producing it for the broadest possible audience, although it increases the flow of information, can have detrimental effects on the quality of intelligence in order to meet release requirements.² The sources and methods that provide valuable information and contribute to analysis may be watered down to the extent that multinational intelligence efforts are unable to provide the operational commander with meaningful, actionable intelligence with which to make decisions.

² Calvert Jones, “Intelligence Reform: The Logic of Information Sharing”, *Intelligence and National Security* 22 no. 3 (2007): 386.

The case against multinational intelligence efforts is further supported by the inherent risk of counterintelligence activities. Some contend that the risk of potential compromise of intelligence sources and methods does not warrant multinational intelligence sharing efforts. Once a nation is provided with information regarding U.S. intelligence capabilities, this knowledge cannot be undone. An operational commander may benefit from sharing intelligence for their particular operation, but the long term negative effect that this intelligence sharing may have on U.S. national interests does not justify the risk associated with multinational intelligence efforts at the operational level.

The risks of degrading intelligence quality and counterintelligence activities are legitimate risks for the operational commander to assess. However, taking the position that these risks are too great and render multinational intelligence activities obsolete is neither helpful nor appropriate. Multinational operations have become the norm. It is the responsibility of the operational commander to assess the risks associated with multinational intelligence and make decisions about how to effectively synchronize this function within multinational operations. However, before an operational commander can assess this risk, it is important to identify the key issues involved with multinational intelligence and take steps to mitigate these issues. This preliminary assessment will forge favorable conditions in which the commander can reap the benefits of multinational intelligence while at the same time minimizing risk.

KEY CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH MULTINATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

With a slight modification to the objective of joint intelligence operations described in Joint Pub 2-01, the objective of multinational intelligence operations is to integrate various nations' intelligence capabilities into a unified effort that surpasses any single nation's effort

and provides the most timely and accurate information to commanders.³ This objective requires trust. Trust is a fundamental issue of multinational intelligence and presents a significant challenge to operational commanders. Intelligence sharing relationships are built on trust and trust takes a substantial amount of time to develop. It is the operational factor of time that makes developing trust such a significant issue for operational commanders. If trust has not been developed amongst multinational coalition members prior to the onset of hostilities, it is too late. And without trust, multinational intelligence sharing will not happen. Multinational partners have to sense that the other partners within a coalition can be trusted to maintain secrecy regarding intelligence sources and methods and that sharing their intelligence will not be used against them or provide their nation with a disadvantage in the future. There is no easy answer on how to build trust but there are several steps the commander can take to address this issue.

The issue of trust is the underlying issue of several of the other issues involved with multinational intelligence. Trust, or lack thereof, reveals itself in another intelligence challenge associated with multinational operations: the careful balancing of the deeply entrenched need-to-know culture surrounding intelligence to a more liberal responsibility-to-provide⁴ ethos to guide the way that intelligence is produced, disseminated, and made available within a coalition. The basic approach taken by the United States Government in handling sensitive information has traditionally been focused on establishing a need-to-

³ Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*, Joint Publication 2-01 (Washington DC: CJCS 05 January 2012), I-1.

⁴ The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) coined the phrase responsibility-to-provide. ODNI Policy Memorandum 2007-200-2 states that “all IC elements have the responsibility to provide intelligence information to all customer who require that information, consistent with all applicable laws, executive orders, and Attorney General procedures promulgated in accordance with EO 12333.”

know.⁵ It is a fairly simple and easily understood premise that sensitive information is made available only to those who have the appropriate clearance and need-to-know that information. The Director of National Intelligence (DNI) recently emphasized the importance of finding the sweet spot between sharing and protecting information.⁶ The implication is that although compromising sensitive information or intelligence can result in the loss of a source or even cause significant damage to United States national security, restricting information too narrowly can result in equally harmful outcomes if information does not make it to those who need it. Operational commanders will benefit by honing in on the sweet spot and working to discover the most appropriate balance between sharing intelligence and protecting secrecy in their area of responsibility.

The U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) has been moving towards a more balanced approach toward intelligence sharing and can serve as a model for operational commanders to follow. A culture has developed within the U.S. Intelligence Community that understands its responsibility to provide and the damage that can be done when information is withheld. This lesson was learned the hard way on September 11, 2001 when the U.S. was unable to connect the pieces of intelligence needed to detect the plot in advance. The 9/11 Commission Report was highly critical of U.S. intelligence. More specifically, the report criticized the lack of intelligence sharing and the system that requires a demonstrated need-to-know before sharing. The report explains that “this approach (need-to-know) assumes it is

⁵ U.S. Library of Congress, CRS, *Intelligence Information: Need-to-Know vs. Need-to-Share*, by Richard A. Best Jr., CRS Report 7-5700 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, June 6, 2011), 1.

⁶ Remarks and Q & A by Director of National Intelligence, Mr. James Clapper, 2010 GEOINT Symposium, New Orleans, November 2, 2010. Viewed online at http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Speeches%20and%20Interviews/Clapper_GEOINT_2010.pdf.

possible to know, in advance, who will need to use the information. Such a system implicitly assumes that the risk of inadvertent disclosure outweighs the benefits of wider sharing.”⁷ Meaning, there has to be a better balance between security and sharing information. In light of this report, the U.S. IC has developed a policy that implements the responsibility-to-provide obligation that guides the way intelligence is produced, assessed, and shared.⁸ The balancing of the need-to-know and responsibility-to-provide has created a dynamic tension designed to produce timely intelligence information usable for the widest appropriate group of customers.⁹

Although the intelligence failures surrounding the events of 9/11 highlight the need for intelligence sharing specifically within U.S. intelligence channels, a parallel can be made to multinational intelligence sharing within a coalition. Similar to the pre-9/11 U.S. IC, when several different partners operated independently within a system in which they were unable to collaborate and provide the most relevant intelligence regarding the developing situation, the same condition can occur within multinational operations. Without an emphasis on the responsibility-to-provide each coalition partner will develop its own intelligence. Disparate gathering of information could easily result in a mistake like that made by the U.S. IC. Several partners will have information that if combined with the intelligence produced by other coalition partners would provide the operational commander with more relevant and accurate intelligence needed to make successful operational decisions. Without the

⁷ *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, official government edition (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004), 417.

⁸ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Preparing Intelligence to Meet the Intelligence Community's "Responsibility to Provide"*, Intelligence Community Policy Memorandum Number 2007-200-2, 1.

⁹ Ibid.

appropriate balance between intelligence sharing and protection, information will be withheld and the coalition will lack unity of effort. Operational commanders will find themselves in situations in which the information is available, each partner holds a piece of the puzzle, but no one is able to put it all together or paint the larger picture of the operational environment. This method that operates on the mist of mistrust could have detrimental operational consequences that could have been avoided.

Even if operational commanders have overcome the issue of trust and have been able to transcend the longstanding resistance to sharing engrained by the need-to-know attitude, they will still find themselves faced with the issue of having to navigate the confusing bureaucratic process for the disclosure of classified intelligence to foreign governments. Classification is necessary for intelligence production and cannot be wished away. The procedures for the release of classified intelligence present an issue that the operational commander must address. The procedures for releasing classified intelligence are found in the *National Policy and Procedures for the Disclosure of Classified Military Information to Foreign Governments and International Organizations* (NDP 1). NDP-1 is a classified document, but is described in Joint Publication 2-0 *Joint Intelligence*, as providing specific disclosure criteria and limitations, release arrangements, and other guidance.¹⁰ These procedures are so complicated that combatant commanders and their J-2 staffs will find the process of intelligence sharing cumbersome and limiting in their ability to produce, assess, and disseminate intelligence during multinational operations.

In addition to NDP-1, which provides many of the classified details about U.S. criteria for disclosure, the Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 5230.11, *Disclosure of*

¹⁰ Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Intelligence*, Joint Publication (JP) 2-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 22 June 2007), 5-2.

Classified Military Information to Foreign Governments and International Organizations, is the unclassified directive describing the process on how to implement NDP-1. DODD 5230.11 states that classified information will be shared with foreign governments only when there is a clearly defined benefit to the U.S.¹¹ Assuming that operational commanders were able to establish a clearly defined benefit to the U.S. prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the procedures that follow are difficult to understand. Disclosure can be approved only by a specifically delegated approval authority and can only be granted once all of the requirements of DODD 5230.11 have been met. These requirements include the approval of security agreements, policy governing international visits and liaison officials, annual surveys, DoD component coordination, and General Council authorization to name a few.¹² In summary, the process for the disclosure of classified information to foreign governments, because it would be beneficial to an operational commander preparing intelligence for multinational operations, is a long process involving sophisticated coordination with multiple organizations and multiple approvals within the government.

Operational commanders that have well established relationships and have built trust with several partners within their operating environment are more likely to have figured out this process and have staffs in place that are able to work the disclosure process effectively. However, this process presents a significant issue for conducting multinational operations in a less mature operating environment. An operational commander or their staff with less experience navigating the cumbersome disclosure process and could not reasonably be expected to garner the necessary release approvals for the operational commander to use

¹¹ U.S. Department of Defense. *Disclosure of Classified Military Information to Foreign Governments and International Organizations*, Department of Defense Directive 5230.11, June 16, 1992, 2.

¹² Ibid.

during multinational operations. The difficulty of the disclosure process presents a significant intelligence challenge to multinational operations.

AN APPROACH TO MITIGATE MULTINATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ISSUES

The intelligence challenges associated with multinational operations, including building trust, finding an appropriate balance between protection and sharing of intelligence, and overcoming the confusing process of disclosure approval can be mitigated by operational commanders in several ways. Strong operational leadership is needed to address these key intelligence issues successfully. Operational commanders are the ultimate integrators of intelligence, those who build teams, build trust, and build relationships.¹³ Operational commanders must have foresight, anticipate future operations, and build relationships with multinational partners. Additionally, they should also possess extensive professional knowledge of foreign policy, diplomacy, and other issues that shape the operational environment.¹⁴ A successful operational commander will have these leadership tenets and use them to ease the issue of trust and lay the groundwork for successful intelligence sharing relationships. Finally, operational commanders have to incorporate intelligence sharing requirements into the planning process. This combination of virtues or expertise will allow an operational commander be to mitigate the challenge of the intelligence disclosure process. Strong operational leadership and multinational planning will lead to success.

Operational commanders can begin to address the issue of trust within their area of responsibility and the impact it has on multinational intelligence with foresight. Operational

¹³ Michael Flynn and Charles Flynn, "Integrating Intelligence and Information: Ten Points for the Commander" *Military Review*, January-February 2012, 8.

¹⁴ Milan Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare* (Newport: Naval War College, reprint 2009), X-

commanders must foresee events and act with eyes focused on the future.¹⁵ With astute operational leadership, operational commanders can envision several possible scenarios that may develop within their area of responsibility and begin to consider what nations may participate and what their need for intelligence may be during a multinational operation. Then they can begin to consider the issue of trust amongst potential multinational partners within a range of possible operational scenarios and address those areas of trust, or lack thereof, most pressing. There is no crystal ball that operational commanders can use to predict the future, but they can use foresight, an important tenet of successful operational leadership, to guide their decision making and relationship development activities.

In addition to foresight, operational commanders should have a high degree of professional knowledge, which will also guide their trust building efforts within their area of responsibility. With a broad knowledge of foreign policy, diplomacy, geopolitics, and other issues at play within an operating environment, operational commanders will be able to further narrow the range of potential multinational operations within their area of responsibility and the associated intelligence requirements. A high degree of professional knowledge will be of great use to an operational commander as they interact with other nation's political leaders, military commanders, and intelligence officers. Understanding a potential partner's culture, political situation, and a working level knowledge of foreign language are important operational leadership qualities that will help operational commanders develop trust which can provide the foundation for future multinational intelligence cooperation.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid, X-9.

¹⁶ Ibid, X-12.

Successful operational commanders take advantage of peacetime activities and theater security cooperation functions during Phase 0 to increase trust. Conducting multinational exercises during peacetime is another effective tool the operational commander can use to mitigate the issue of trust its potential negative effects on multinational intelligence. Multinational intelligence systems, policies, and procedures, must be a part of multinational exercises and incorporated into simulations.¹⁷ Exercising multinational intelligence will help operational commanders ensure that the multinational intelligence process is interoperable amongst participating nations and that standard for survivability, security, and compatibility are met.¹⁸ The opportunity to learn more about various partner capabilities and intelligence strengths provides another motive to exercise multinational intelligence processes. Then, having observed various partner's intelligence contributions during an exercise the operational commander will be more informed about how to best leverage each nation's unique intelligence strengths. Exercises provide the operational commander an important opportunity to develop trust and mitigate the risk involved with sharing intelligence.

Along with developing relationships, building trust, and exercising multinational intelligence processes, perhaps the most critical action an operational commander can take to mitigate the issues associated with multinational intelligence is to plan for multinational intelligence operations. Multinational intelligence planning is not significantly different from traditional unilateral intelligence planning process outlined in Joint Publication 2-01 *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Operations*, but intelligence activities during multinational operations present unique challenges. The Joint Operation Planning Process

¹⁷ Chairman U.S. JCS, *Joint Intelligence*, V-7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

(JOPP) provides an effective framework for planning that can be applied to multinational operations. To avoid confusion, the multinational version of the JOPP could be referred to as the Multinational Operation Planning Process (MOPP). The JOPP and the MOPP would be almost identical, but the MOPP would address issues unique to multinational operations such as multinational intelligence. Incorporating these considerations into the MOPP would provide the greatest possible coordination and synchronization for an operation while minimizing the risk of overlooking the intelligence issues associated with multinational operations.¹⁹ Unfortunately, the MOPP does not exist. Yet, it is still important to consider how the current JOPP could be used as a framework for a MOPP.

The first step in the JOPP is initiation. During the initiation step, the decision-making process begins. Intelligence support during this step includes assessing the current theatre collection strategy, collection posture, and intelligence production strategy.²⁰ It is during this step that the operational commander must begin to incorporate multinational intelligence considerations. In the assessment of the theatre collection strategy and posture, the commander should assess whether the collection strategy and posture are optimized for multinational intelligence coordination or whether sufficient flexibility exists to accommodate multinational requirements. For example, at this step existing intelligence sharing agreements should be reassessed in light of the commander's intent in order to allow time for adjustments in collection priorities or sharing agreement development. Also, the theatre intelligence production strategy should be assessed during the initiation step with multinational intelligence production strategies incorporated into the plan.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of the Army, *Staff Organization and Operations*, Field Manual 101-5, Washington D.C., May 31, 1997, 5-1.

²⁰ Chairman U.S. JCS, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*, IV-9.

The second step of the JOPP is mission analysis. This step ensures complete understanding of the commander's intent, the mission, and the higher commander's CONOPS.²¹ The intelligence support to mission analysis is extensive. It includes determining intelligence constraints and restraints and developing guidance on intelligence operations for supporting commands.²² With a focus on multinational intelligence operations, the mission analysis step will reveal the intelligence constraints and restraints presented by a multinational effort. The constraints presented by multinational intelligence require special attention during this planning step since the multinational aspect brings constraints that are significantly different from normal intelligence operations. For instance, the procedures for sharing intelligence, network interoperability, and administrative requirements can all place formidable constraints on a multinational intelligence effort.

The mission analysis step also develops guidance for subordinate commands. This guidance should include sufficient information regarding multinational intelligence operations, further emphasizing the responsibility-to-provide ethos. This guidance will play a critical role in ensuring that all commands are unified in their understanding of the intelligence releasability guidance and that they are sufficiently informed about current intelligence sharing processes and requirements.

The next three steps of the JOPP involve course of action (COA) development, analysis, and comparison. Multinational intelligence considerations must continue to be incorporated into the plan during these steps in order to mitigate the issues surrounding multinational intelligence of trust, releasability, and the challenging disclosure process. As COAs are developed each will have advantages and disadvantages from an intelligence

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

perspective.²³ The comparison of COAs is critical. The COAs will provide varying levels of risk and flexibility. Understanding the issues involved with multinational intelligence and the impact that these issues have on the risk and flexibility should be articulated at this step.

Once the operational commander approves a COA the final step is plan development. During plan development, the J-2 is responsible for developing the intelligence annex.²⁴ The intelligence annex should articulate a concept of multinational intelligence operations and provide guidance regarding the multinational intelligence mission, assumptions, and limitations. The development of this annex will bring the multinational intelligence plan together. It will be very beneficial to the operational commander to have worked through the issues associated with multinational intelligence during the planning phase.

CONCLUSION

Multinational commanders must understand the key issues involved with multinational intelligence. Mistrust, willingness to share and the cumbersome bureaucratic process of getting intelligence released are all issues the operational commander must face. During a multinational operation, multinational intelligence will provide the commander the most timely, complete, and accurate understanding of the operating environment. Without an emphasis toward addressing the issues presented by multinational intelligence well in advance of the commencement of an operation the commander will risk being left with fragmented, incomplete intelligence. Relationship building, exercising, and planning for multinational intelligence operations will serve the commander well and lead to mission success.

²³ Ibid, IV-12.

²⁴ Ibid.

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